

The Taliban: A Well-Documented Legacy of Brutality

The Taliban's disregard for human life, employment of scorched earth policies against its enemies, intolerance of religious, ethnic or cultural differences, enforcement of an extreme version of Islam, and potential war crimes, combine to create a "human rights catastrophe" in Afghanistan. Specific examples of these behaviors include:

Treatment of Woman and Girls

Afghan woman and girls are subjected to rape, kidnapping and forced marriage. Taliban restrictions are widespread, institutionally sanctioned, and systemic. Taliban edicts enforce strict dress codes, prohibit women from working outside the home, or attending school, among other restrictions.

- Taliban reportedly abducted women from the Taloqan area during the fighting from June – October 2000. In August 1999, Taliban reportedly abducted women near Shomali plains and possibly trafficked them in Pakistan for prostitution. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001*
- Taliban religious police beat individuals on the streets for infractions of rules on dress, or the prohibition of women being with unrelated men. According to one report, a woman struggling with her two small children and groceries was beaten with a car antenna because her face covering slipped. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001; US Department of State March 1998 Report on Women and Girls in Afghanistan*
- Prohibiting women from working outside their home is particularly hard on the 30,000 widows from the civil war. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001*
- Taliban restrictions on women's medical care have left Afghan women with little or no access to health care. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001*

Massacres Against Civilians

The Taliban massacred hundreds of Afghan civilians, many of the victims were targeted because of their ethnic or religious identity.

- In January 2001, Taliban forces captured the town of Yakaolang and executed at least 170 civilians. On 19 January, 2001, UN SecGen Kofi Annan issued a statement expressing concern about "numerous credible reports" that civilians were deliberately killed in Yakaolang and demanded a "prompt investigation". *The U.N. Commission on Human Rights Feb 01; Human Rights Watch*

- In May 2000, the Taliban systematically executed as many as 100 ethnic Uzbek prisoners in Samagan province. *The U.N. Commission on Human Rights February, 01; Human Rights Watch*
- In the August 1998 fight for Mazar-I-Sharif, Taliban forces summarily executed ethnic Hazara, Jajik, and Uzbek civilians. There are also reports that women and girls were raped and abducted. *Human Rights Watch*

Massacre at a Muslim Mosque

- In the January 2001 attack on Yakaolang, eyewitnesses reported rocket attacks on a mosque where women, children and elderly had taken shelter. Dozens were killed in the mosque. *Amnesty International*

Attacks on Humanitarian Aid

- Taliban attacks on humanitarian relief agencies are increasing as they steal equipment, supplies, and vehicles. These assaults are directly contributing the starvation of Afghani people. *18 October, Human Rights Watch*
- 16 October, the Taliban seized control of two U.N. warehouses containing more than half the World Food Program's wheat supply for Afghanistan. *17 October U.S. Department of State Fact Sheet*

Scorched Earth Policy

- In its fight with the Northern Alliance, the Taliban have indiscriminately shelled and bombed civilians. Taliban have burned homes, killed livestock, uprooted orchards and destroyed irrigation systems.
- In August 1999, the Taliban's scorched earth operation displaced up to 100,000 people north of Kabul. *30 August Iranian News Agency; 26 August Hindustan Times in India*
- In August-September 2000, Taliban's indiscriminate bombardment of the town of Taloqan forced tens of thousands of civilians to flee their homes. Reportedly, during the fighting the Taliban bombarded a nearby village, burned all the houses and killed some of the villagers. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001*

Targeted Assassinations

- From 1998-2000 alone, Amnesty International suspects the Taliban was responsible for making dozens of death threats against Afghans living in Pakistan, several of whom were subsequently killed. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001*

- Summary executions of opponents is common, the U.N. Commission on Human Rights has received numerous reports of prisoners' executions in Taliban-held areas. *U.N. Press Release, 24 October 2001*

Torture

- The U.N. Commission on Human Rights reported that former Taliban prisoners have provided "harrowing accounts of torture." *U.N. Press Release, 24 October 2001*

Religious Persecution and Intolerance

- Taliban continue to hold Shelter Now International detainees for preaching Christianity. Under the Taliban, conversion from Islam is considered apostasy and is punishable by death. *US Department of State, Country Report on Human Rights Practices, February 2001; Reuters*
- In May 2001, Taliban decreed (but have not yet enforced) Hindus wearing distinguishing identification on their clothing. In September 1999, the Taliban forbade non-Muslims from building places of worship. *Human Rights Watch May 2001*
- Taliban destruction of ancient sculptures, including the two centuries old colossal Buddhist statues in Bamiyan.

Narcotics Trafficking

- Afghanistan is one of the world's largest opium producers and accounted for more than 70% of the world's illicit opium supply in 2000. The Taliban control most of the country's poppy cultivation and use funds from opium sales to finance its military. *U.S. Department of State, Afghan Country Study 2000*